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ABSTRACT

Cultural competence in business Japanese requires more than superficial knowledge of business etiquette. One must truly understand why Japanese people think and act differently from their American counterparts. For example, instruction in the use of Japanese taxis must be accompanied by instruction in the concept and implications of seating order in the general culture. The use of videotape recordings can help enhance competence in Japanese business culture, but appropriate video material for learning Japanese within the context of business culture is not yet available. At Eastern Michigan University, development of the Language and Trade Program, including the Japanese for International Trade course, has required development of appropriate instructional materials. The course is designed not to teach how to conduct formal negotiations in Japanese but to help students understand the sources of conflict and misunderstanding in American-Japanese negotiations and to develop communicative skills needed for informal contact with Japanese personnel. A Japanese text was developed by the teacher to accompany a commercially produced videotape series in English on entering a product into the Japanese market. The Japanese text (appended to the document) summarizes each scene, notes points of importance, includes vocabulary and sentence examples, and provides content review questions. (MSE)

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# CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN BUSINESS JAPANESE

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When asked which second language is critical to career success in the 1990's, U.S. corporate executives polled chose Spanish (44% of respondents) and Japanese (33%) over other languages including French (8%), German (5%) and Russian (1%).[1] Yet there are some people who claim that Americans should learn Japanese business culture rather than the language because most business talks and negotiations are conducted in English or through interpreters. Why, they wonder, should Americans spend so much time on studying Japanese language when they can learn about Japanese business culture more quickly in English and when they can hire professional interpreters?

Given the opportunity cost of studying Japanese language from scratch and an urgent need for "instant" specialists in doing business with the Japanese, it is understandable that some people do not listen to educators' assertion on the inseparability of language and culture in the development of communicative competence and in true understanding of culture. However, it should be reminded that U.S. businesses have already missed or lost countless business opportunities with the Japanese due to the lack of personnel fully competent in Japanese language and culture for business communication. Most American companies still have to rely on English-speaking employees of Japanese companies they deal with or on Japanese professional interpreters (since American interpreters are extremely in short supply), who are, quite often, not familiar with differences in

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business customs and practices between the U.S. and Japan. Moreover, unless communicatively competent in Japanese, American business people will not succeed in developing long-term, interpersonal relations with Japanese personnel who are not fluent in English. This will be a significant obstacle to doing successfully business with the Japanese, because it is critical in Japanese business culture to cultivate informal channells of communication, personal contacts and *ningen kankei* (human relations) with personnel at all levels.

Some Japanese business people and cross-cultural consultants agree with those Americans who believe a high level of cultural competence can be achieved without linguistic and cultural performance and that learning about Japanese business culture is far more important than learning the language. It is true that competence in Japanese business culture is critical when dealing with the Japanese. You will be mistaken if you think you can do business succesfully with the Japanese simply because you can speak Japanese. However, this is only half true if the significance of developing communicative competence in business Japanese is not understood. Most Japanese business people maintain that Americans should learn Japanese if they want to succeed in the Japanese market. This is often *tatemae* (public truth or official stance). If I were in a business competing with Americans in the Japanese market, my *hon'ne* (private truth or true feeling) would be that I would not want Americans to be more competitive by

learning Japanese language and culture for business communication.

Culture is "both something you perform and something you learn about," often referred to as cultural performance and cultural competence, respectively.[2] If we want learners to be communicatively competent in business Japanese or to be prepared for working for or doing business with the Japanese, we need to develop a program which teaches Japanese in the context of Japanese business culture. What needs to be developed urgently is the cultural component of business Japanese, becuause traditional Japanese language programs have not even addressed the issue of developing competence in Japanese business culture.

Achieving a level of oral proficiency in Japanese may do more harm than good unless it is accompanied by an equivalent level of competence in Japanese culture. As learners' linguistic competence increases, they are expected by the Japanese to have corresponding competence in Japanese culture and to behave accordingly. This is all the more true when working or dealing with Japanese business people. Yet, there are many non-native speakers of Japanese including college instructors who are not very much competent in understanding and communicating with Japanese business people even after having studied Japanese for years. This is largely due to the fact that traditional Japanese language programs have not been designed to prepare learners for developing competence in Japanese business culture. A foreign

business person, if he/she speaks Japanese, could annoy or even offend the Japanese more easily than otherwise when he/she shows poor competence and performance in Japanese business culture.

When communicating, working and dealing with the Japanese, we cannot emphasize too much the significance of developing competence in business culture--making cross-cultural comparisons of similarities and differences in management styles, negotiation styles, decision-making processes, perceptions of business contracts, etc. between the U.S. and Japan. The following few examples will suffice to illustrate the point that one cannot effectively communicate and deal with Japanese business people without competence in their culture.

--Japanese business people behave differently, depending on their perception of their status vis-a-vis others. Relative status is determined by such factors as age, position, title, gender role, size of a company one belongs to, and by whether the company is a buyer or a seller. When a Japanese company is a buyer--especially when it is larger than a seller in a buyer's market--the buyer expects the seller to understand its special needs or to accept seemingly non-negotiable demands, not to mention to show respect and humility. Status-conscious Japanese will be easily annoyed or offended if others do not behave according to their relative status.

--The Japanese often spend so much time and energy on developing a consensus on their position that they may come to a

negotiation without alternative plans or strategies. The expected opportunity cost of reaching a new concensus is often so high that the Japanese may not listen to different issues or new proposals even if they seem financially attractive.

--The Japanese are not likely to start bargaining by making concrete offers before developing comprehensive understanding of all issues and demands; they may make modest concessions only when they feel they are close to agreement. Frustrated by the slow progress of a negotiation, Americans often make premature concessions to reach agreement.

The development of communicative competence in business Japanese requires far more than a study of business-related vocabulary and terminology as well as business etiquette and protacol. Business culture should be discovered in the language itself and in the interaction of the language users; at the same time, the language should be learned in the cultural context. In the following I will describe the business Japanese curriculum at Eastern Michigan University, focusing on the content to be studied and the development of instructional materials for JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade (the first of the sequence of three business Japanese courses). This is an attempt to show what an enoumous task awaits us in this new frontier of Japanese study.

Business Japanese is the study of *Japanese language and culture for business communication*. It is defferent from other

Japanese language studies in that learning about and performing Japanese business culture is an integral part of the study. Business Japanese has no raison d'être without this cultural component. For example, why should we refer to a Japanese study as business Japanese if we introduce a lesson on how to get around by taking a cab without incorporating the concept of *sekiji* or seating order into the discourse.[3] How important is it to include a lesson on dining at a restaurant in business Japanese if we don't integrate with the lesson the significane of building up *ningen kankei* by socializing and an inappropriateness of engaging in detalied busienss discussion at a dinner table.

Business communication with the Japanese takes place when doing business, whether in Japan or abroad, dealing and negotiating with the Japanese or when working with the Japanese, whether for a Japanese company or for a joint venture project. Each setting requires a different focus on the content of Japanese business culture.

There are three business Japanese courses in the Japanese component of EMU's Language and International Trade program or Language and World Business program. They are JPN 361 Japanese for International Trade, JPN 446 Business Japanese I and JPN 447 Business Japanese II. JPN 361 not only provides an overview of Japanese business culture, but also focuses on negotiating with the Japanese, emphasizing the cultural competence more than the performance. JPN 446 focuses on communication inside the

Japanese company and provides an overview of the system of organization and personnel relations, including such topics as employment, promotion, decision making and interpersonal relations. This course begins with a lesson on job application and interview, and includes lessons which deal with some difficulties both Japanese and American personnel may face when they work together in the U.S. JPN 447 is designed to help students to prepare for doing business in Japan, covering such topics as commercial customs, intercorporate relations, distribution system, sales promotion, and advertising.

The biggest problem I have been facing as I have designed and developed the above three courses is a practically complete lack of instructional materials. In the following I will describe the course outline and objectives of JPN 361 and the instructional materials I have been developing.

Although focusing on negotiating with the Japaneses, JPN 361 is *not* a course for teaching how to conduct *formal* negotiations in Japanese. Some university administrators--even of those which do not have a four-year Japanese program--pressure their Japanese section or department to offer a business Japanese course, expecting students to be able to conduct a formal negotiation in Japanese upon completion of such a course. Such an expectation is totally unrealistic unless students have already studied Japanese intensively in Japan for several years after completion of a four-year Japanese program. JPN 361 is designed to help

students to understand sources of conflict and misunderstanding in negotiatons between the Japanese and Americans, and to develop commuicative skills needed for *informal* contact with Japanese personnel. Even when detailed negotiations are conducted in English or through interpreters, developing an informal channel of communication is essential for doing business successfully with the Japanese. Besides, communicating with the Japanese under an informal setting does not require so high a level of oral proficieny as it does under a formal negotiation setting.

The topics for the cultural component integrated in the Japanese text include the following:

a. values and beliefs the Japanese act on
b. communicating with the Japanese in English or through an interpreter
c. Japanese business etiquette
d. formality and seating arrangement
e. socializing and entertaining
f. the importance of using contacts and connections
g. the importance of social encounter with all levels of personnel
h. the importance of using a proper channel of communication
i. selection of a Japanese negotiation team
j. role of middle managenment
k. differences in decision making styles

l. differences in goals and styles of negotiation

m. the Japanese perception of bargaining power and status

n. Japanese negotiation strategies

o. impasse and conflict

p. concluding an agreement and the Japanese perception of business contracts.

The Japanese text I have developed is integrated with a 6-volume video narrated in English, entitled *Taking Your Product into the Japanese Market.*[4] To the best of my knowledge, this is the most comprehensive, commercially available video that provides an overview of how to negotiate with the Japanese. Since this video is designed for American business people who neither speak Japanese nor know about its business culture, I have developed the Japanese text for JPN 361 which provides a summary of each scene and explains important points to remember. Each scene or lesson includes names and titles of major players, a brief summary of the scene, points to remember, with each followed by vocabulary and sentence examples. Questions on the content are included for review in each of 6 chapters (see Appendix A for a sample).

The story of the video revolves around an American sales manager who visits Japan for the first time in an attempt to sell his company's precision equipment. By observing a series of mistakes he makes, studnets will learn differences in doing business and conducting negotiations between the U.S. and Japan. After watching each scene, students will learn how to describe the

scene and explain important points in Japanese. All the important Japanese words, expressions and concepts will be learned in the cultural context presented by the video and studied by reading a collection of articles written in English. For example, when students learn "Nihon no kaisha wa shinrai ni motozuita chokitekina torihiki kankei o jushisuru (Japanese companies attach much importance to long-term business relations based on trust)," they will have already understood what it really means and why such is the case in Japan. This linguistic and cultural knowledge will be actually used later, for example, in a lesson on job interview included in JPN 446 Business Japanese I, where students will be asked by a Japanese interviewer to explain the Japanese way of doing business (see Appendix B for a sample). Role plays by students in JPN 446 will be video taped for review and discussion.

Cultural competence in business Japanese requires more than superficial knowledge on Japanese business etiquette (bowing and shaking hands, ritual of exchanging business cards, etc.). One has to truely understand why Japanese business people think and act differntly from American counterparts. The use of video will certainly help students to enhance competence in Japanese business culture, but an appropriate video material for learning Japanese in the context of business culture is yet to come. For the time being, we have little choice but to make the most of whatever materials available to us. For this reason, I have

developed the Japanese text in an attempt to incorporate the culture video narrated in English into the language class.

## Notes

1. U.S. News & World Report, Dec. 25, 1989/Jan. 1., 1990, p. 66.

2. Claire J. Kramsch, "New Directions in the Teaching of Language and Culture," NFLC Occasional Paper, April 1989, p. 6.

3. For such an exmaple, see International Division of Nissan Motor Co., Business Japanese (Tokyo: Bonjin Co., 1984), p. 67 in Lesson 6.

4. AFT Productions, 1985-86. Distributed by SIETAR INTERNATIONAL 1414 Twenty-Second St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. Phone: (202) 296-4710.

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APPENDIX A　　場面14　二度目の会談

登場人物

ロイド　マクスウェル
萩原　通訳

大日本技術社
購買部：　山本　課長
　　小西
技術部：　山田　課長　（第一課）
　　小川　（第二課）
輸出部：　川上

あらすじ

通訳の使用により大日本とのコミュニケーションは向上したが、前会談と同様　大日本側は探りを入れるだけで具体的な話に入ろうとしなかった。

単語

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 使用（しよう） | use |
| | ～の使用により | by (with, through) the use of ～ |
| 2. | コミュニケーション | communication |
| 3. | 向上（こうじょう）する | to improve |
| 4. | 前（ぜん）... | the previous... |
| 5. | 会談（かいだん） | a talk, conference, meeting |
| 6. | ～と同様（どうよう） | like～, in the same manner as ～ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7. | 探（さぐ）り | sounding, feeling out |
| | 探りを入（い）れる | to sound out |

要点

13. 日本の会社は信頼に基づいた長期的な取引関係を重視する。　会社の信頼性は製品のメリットと同様重要だ。　品質や価格の競争力は取引の必要条件であっても、十分条件ではない。

14. 日本側は製品のメリット等を検討する前に、相手側の会社のことを知るのに十分な時間を費やす。

15. 日本人の沈黙には　いろいろな意味がある。　すぐに沈黙をうめようとしない方がいい。

16. 日本側交渉団のメンバーはチームの一員としての役割を与えられており、他人の役割や他部門の領域を侵さないように注意する。　部下は上司の指示を待って話すことが多い。

単語

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 信頼（しんらい） | trust, reliance |
| 2. | ～に基（もと）づく | to be based on～ |
| 3. | 長期的（ちょうきてき）な | long-term |
| 4. | 取引（とりひき） | trade, business, transaction |
| 5. | 関係（かんけい） | relation, relationship, connection |
| | 取引関係 | business relations |
| 6. | 重視（じゅうし）する | attach great importance to, regard～as important, value highly |
| 7. | 信頼性（しんらいせい） | reliability , dependability |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8. | メリット | advantage, quality, value, merit |
| 9. | 品質（ひんしつ） | quality (of a product) |
| 10. | 価格（かかく） | price |
| 11. | 競争（きょうそう） | competition |
| | 競争する | to compete |
| | 競争力（りょく） | competitiveness, competitive power, competitive edge |
| | 競争力がある | to be competitive |
| 12. | 必要（ひつよう） | necessity, need |
| | 必要な | necessary |
| 13. | 条件（じょうけん） | condition(s) |
| | 必要条件 | necessary condition(s) |
| 14. | Vても | even if (though)...VERB |
| 15. | 十分（じゅうぶん）な | enough, sufficient, plenty of |
| | 十分条件 | sufficient condition(s) |
| 16. | ... 等（など） | ...,etc. |
| 17. | 検討（けんとう）する | to examine, study, review |
| 18. | 費（つい）やす | to spend |
| 19. | 沈黙（ちんもく） | silence |
| 20. | 意味（いみ） | meaning, implication |
| 21. | うめる | to fill (make) up (a gap, etc.) |
| 22. | ...団（だん） | party, team, group, troupe |
| 23. | Vており | ＝Vていて |
| 24. | 他人（たにん） | other persons |
| 25. | 他部門（たぶもん） | other departments (sections, etc.) |
| 26. | 領域（りょういき） | territory, domain, jurisdiction |
| 27. | 侵（おか）す | violate, intrude (into), invade |
| 28. | 注意（ちゅうい）する | to be careful, cautious, take care |
| 29. | Vないように | (so as) not to VERB |
| 30. | 上司（じょうし） | (one's) superior (officer), boss |
| 31. | 指示（しじ） | direction, instruction |
| 32. | ... ことが多（おお）い | it is often the case that... |

文例

1. 信頼, 信頼する

信頼がなければ、人間関係も取引関係も　うまく行きません。

(人間関係＝human/interpersonal relations)

あの人は信頼できません。

2. ～に基づく

この映画は本当の話に基づいています。

日本では信頼に基づいた取引関係が大切です。

3. 長期的な

経済の長期的な予測はむずかしいです。

(予測＝forecast, projection)

あの会社との長期的な取引関係はお互いの信頼に基づいています。

(お互いの＝each other's)

4. 品質

安くても品質がよくないと、日本では売れません。

品質を改善するにはどうしたらいいか皆で考えよう。

(改善する＝to improve; 考える＝to think, consider)

5. 価格

この製品は価格はいいけれども、品質が悪いです。

もっと価格を下げないと、売れないでしょう。

(下げる＝to lower)

6. 競争、競争力

日本市場は競争が激しいです。

(市場＝market, marketplace; 激しい＝to be fierce)

ウチの製品は国際的にも競争力があります。

(ウチ＝our company/group, the inside; 国際的に＝internationally)

品質がよくても価格の競争力がないと売れません。

7. 条件(じょうけん)

取引(とりひき)の条件があまりよくないです。

そんな条件では、取引は無理(むり)でしょう。

(そんな＝such a...;　無理だ＝to be impossible)

8. 検討(けんとう)、検討する

価格(かかく)と品質(ひんしつ)の検討が必要(ひつよう)です。

(必要だ＝to be necessary)

「検討しておきましょう。」とか「考(かんが)えておきます。」というのは普通(ふつう)ダメだとか無理(むり)だという意味(いみ)です。

9. 上司(じょうし)

田中部長は私の上司で、山口君(やまぐちくん)は私の部下(ぶか)です。

あの人は飲みに行くと、上司の悪口(わるくち)ばかり言います。

(～の悪口を言う＝to speak ill of ～)

APPENDIX B

# 第一課　面接

## 登場人物

ジョン・ミラー　　アメリカの大学で日本語とマーケティングを学び、日本の会社に就職を希望している。

田中　健二　　三洋商事　人事課の課長。

ジョン・ミラーは大学に在学中、日系企業　数社に履歴書を送った。
今日は　面接試験を受けるように言われて、三洋商事を訪ねた。

田中　　ミラーさんですね。
ミラー　　はい、そうです。　はじめまして。
田中　　人事課の田中です。　どうぞ　おかけください。
ミラー　　失礼します。
田中　　ここは　すぐに分かりましたか。
ミラー　　はい。　地図を送っていただいたので、すぐ分かりました。
田中　　失礼ですが、ミラーさんは　まだ　お一人ですか。
ミラー　　いいえ、結婚しております。
田中　　お子さんは。
ミラー　　まだ　おりません。

田中　この履歴書によりますと、ミラーさんは　イースタン・ミシガン大学で日本語を勉強されたんですね。

ミラー　はい。　イースタンにはビジネス・ジャパニーズのコースが三つございまして、日本語の他に、日米の商習慣の違いや日本的経営などを特に勉強しました。

田中　それは　おもしろそうですね。　たとえば　商習慣ですが、日本とアメリカでは　どういうところが違いますか。

ミラー　そうですね。　たとえば、日本の会社は　信頼に基づいた長期的な取引関係を重視すると学びました。　それから、一般的に言って、日本の会社では根回しによる意思決定やウチやソトでの人間関係がとても大切だと思います。

田中　すいぶん　むずかしい言葉を知っていますね。

ミラー　いいえ。　ビジネス・ジャパニーズのクラスで学んだんです。国際交渉のビデオなどを見たりして、とてもためになりました。

田中　そうですか。　ところで、日本には行ったことが　おありですか。

ミラー　はい。　二度行ったことが　ございます。　一度目は　９ヵ月ほどいて、おもに日本語を勉強しました。　二度目は　大同という会社の研修生として４ヵ月間働きました。

田中　研修生と言うと、どんなことをされたんですか。

ミラー　大同という会社は電子機器を製造している会社で、アメリカに支店があります。　私は輸出部で　アメリカ市場における製品の宣伝、販売企画に参加させていただきました。

短い期間でしたが、いろいろと勉強させていただきました。

田中　どうして当社に入社を希望されるのですか。

ミラー　御社は最も国際化の進んだ日本企業として、全世界を舞台に数知れない分野で、ビジネスを展開されていますが、アメリカと日本という最も高度化した市場を舞台に、常に新しいビジネスの展開を追及されています。　そこにとても魅力を感じるのです。

田中　入社したら、どういうことをやりたいと思っておられますか。

ミラー　やはり、自分のやってきたことを生かす仕事がしたい　と思っております。　母国語である英語と　勉強した日本語、日本文化、マーケティングの生かせることが出来ればと、思っております。

田中　ミラーさんのほうから、何か質問がありますか。

ミラー　いいえ、今のところは別に　ございません。

田中　そうですか。　それでは、二、三週間中に結果をご連絡いたしますので．．．．．

ミラー　どうぞ、よろしくお願いいたします。　それでは、失礼します。